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CORRESPONDENCE

Popular names

Editor of 'THE AUK:'

In considering the various problems connected with popular names for birds, particularly as discussed in 'The Auk' for July, 1920, it seems to me that one important feature has been omitted. You state, page 503, "Fortunately we have not and cannot have a code covering the use of popular names." In the Migratory Bird Treaty certain of the Families mentioned are definitely identified in Latin, but the great majority of names, whether of groups or species, are in the common tongue. How can any of these groups or species be identified in law except by reference to such codes of common names as that furnished in the A. O. U. 'Check-List'?

As to Mr. Rowan's suggestion to give several popular names in the 'Check-List' where there are several in use, I fear that if one of them be not made official that all of them will have to be given in future laws requiring the mention of such species. If several in common use were given, one being official, it could always be proved that the official name, which would be the one used in law, included the others given in the 'Check-List'.

It will save the bird protectionist, bird law maker, and bird law administrator, endless trouble if one set of common names be official, and the 'Check-List' has weight in this connection.

The law follows common usage; e. g., Siwash Duck for Scoter, Sea Duck for Eider, and in French similar synonyms are necessary so that all may understand, but the 'Check-List' is nevertheless a stabilizer.

If the common names were not given the stability afforded by the 'Check-List', it would be most difficult to teach the sportsman what bird was meant by the Wood Duck, for example. Common usage in some localities gives this name to birds, I judge, from description, to be the Hooded Merganser, in others to the Golden-eye, because these species too nest in trees. Are the bird protectors to spend time and money in teaching that the Wood Duck is *Aix sponsa* and needs special protection, only to have the bird checkers bow to the "genius of language" which says these are all Wood Ducks, and so name them in the 'Check-List'?

406 Queen Street,
Ottawa, Ontario,
October 21, 1921.

Yours sincerely,
HOYES LLOYD.

We publish Mr. Lloyd's letter inasmuch as it is a criticism on some of our remarks. Many other interesting papers have been submitted for publication bearing upon the question of popular names,—so many in fact that there seems to be no alternative but to return them, as other

matter would be crowded out for some time to come if we attempted to print them. Every contributor seems to have different ideas upon the subject and as there is no definite basis to work from the discussion while interesting fails to reach any result.

As a comment upon Mr Lloyd's remarks on the legal side of the question we might say that in a case in the Philadelphia courts some years ago the judge would accept only Warren's 'Birds of Pennsylvania' as authority for names, and the accidental use of "Cardinal Grosbeak" on a plate in that work was all that prevented his agreement with the lawyer's contention that a "Cardinal" was not a Grosbeak nor a Finch and therefore not protected by law. Legal Ornithology seems to be a science in itself!—Ed.]

Species and Subspecies.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

In the July number of 'The Auk' (1921, p. 482), some criticisms are made upon a letter entitled "The Last Phase of the Subspecies" written by Mr. C. Mackworth Praed and myself in the April number of 'The Ibis', (1921, pp. 344-347), in answer to a letter emanating from Mr. Loomis.

In writing this letter Mr Praed and I rather set ourselves to provoke criticism and a discussion of this vexed question. It was not, however, our desire to be misquoted and I, personally, hold the opinion that however desirable criticism may be, it, at least, behooves the critic to read carefully what he sets out to criticise.

Your reviewer states, for instance, "These gentlemen seem to regard the species and subspecies as two different things." As this is precisely and essentially the reverse of what, at any rate, are my own views, I may perhaps be excused for quoting what we did say, especially as it was deliberately said in order to make the matter quite definitely plain.

"On the other hand, to those who accept *in toto* the Darwinian theory or what is commonly accepted as the Darwinian theory, and all that it implies, all subspecies will appear of great value as "incipient species." Now, for our part, it has always been a matter of the greatest difficulty to imagine how a geographical form *which in fact is already a species* can be termed an incipient one" (italics mine).

We then went on, after a slight digression, to repeat the generally accepted view that there would appear to be two main forms of variation, one known as a discontinuous or mutational and heritable form and the other as a fluctuating environmental and non-heritable form; and finally we expressed the opinion that subspecies could be referred to one or the other of these two forms of variation, incidentally leaving the reader to infer that subspecies as nowadays recognised by ornithologists could, in reality, be classified under two categories possessing different values or rank.